

October Update, 2012 Vol. 5, Issue 3

SH 20 Update - by Heather Docherty

Construction of the motorway has well and truly begun in the Alan Wood Reserve area, with the first realigned section of Oakley Creek (just over 200m) now in action. Where the Creek ran through the old basalt lined channel, the new stream has been constructed with a more natural stream profile and meander - with a series of runs, riffles and pools to help improve the stream health long-term, and extensive planting of native vegetation. Prior to the 'switching over' from the old to the new, a total of 936 eels were moved from the old portion of the creek and released downstream. Fourteen of the eels were "chronically threatened in gradual decline" long-fin eels (http://www.longfineel.co.nz). The eels were caught using fyke nets and by electric fishing, which stuns the fish and is not harmful to them.





The Well Connected Alliance goes fishing (above) and catches a very old and large eel (left). Photos: Well Connected Alliance

At the Waterview end of the project, it appears that Construction Yard 7, which was planned to occupy the whole of Waterview Glades, will no longer be required. The tunnel boring machine that will be used allows the tunnel to travel under the reserve, as opposed to construction using the 'cut-and-cover' method. This is great news, as we had major concerns about the proximity to the creek of this yard and the amount of earthworks that were required to construct the tunnel at that location.

For more information on the project, see Dorothy Maddock's article below and the NZ Transport Agency website,

www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/waterviewconnection/index.html

Waterview Precinct Plan

Auckland Council is currently developing a precinct plan for Waterview, to be available by December. The precinct plan will provide a long-term guide for land use and development at the local suburban scale, now that the alignment of State Highway 20 is confirmed. It will look at land use, open space, infrastructure, transport, the environment, urban design and historic heritage. More specifically, it will identify initiatives and aspirations to support the future sustainability of Waterview such as connections to and from the area, community and recreation facilities and services requirements and provision, housing choice and variety, environmental outcomes, open space and social wellbeing. The precinct plan will include a series of maps that show detail about outcomes and opportunities for Waterview.

If you wish to have more information or to contribute, contact Adam Johnstone, Auckland Council.



Tonkin and Taylor stream profile monitoring for the SH 20 project.
Photo: W. John

Secretary - volunteer needed

We would like to say thanks to Richard Nightingale, who has stepped down from the committee, for his contribution. We now need a new secretary - our meetings on the third Monday of each month - any volunteers? Please contact Wendy, ph 815 3101.

Dates for your diary

Bring your family and friends - and spread the word about:

Sunday 4^{th} November, 10.00 am – noon: Community Working Bee

Sunday 2nd December, 10.00 am - noon: Community Working Bee

Sunday 9th December, 12.00 pm: End of Year Picnic - to celebrate another successful year of Friends of Oakley Creek activities. Bring a picnic rug or chair and a plate of food to share at Harbutt Reserve.

See <u>www.oakleycreek.org.nz</u> or contact Wendy John, by emailing **info@oakleycreek.org.nz** or ph 815 3101 for more information.



Ruby bonnet fungus, Mycena viscidocruenta.

Photo: W. John



Albert Eden Boundary project

On behalf of the Albert Eden Local Board, Friends of Oakley Creek are undertaking a survey of properties that border Oakley Creek parks and reserves within the Albert Eden Local Board area. The Board wishes to determine whether property owners would be interested in receiving assistance with weed control, if funding or resources become available in the future. The long-term aim is to maintain a weed free buffer zone in the neighbourhoods around Oakley Creek to reduce the spread of environmental weeds and to reduce reserve weed control costs over time. A similar survey is also being carried out around the upper reaches of Meola Creek and around Mt Eden / Maungawhau.

Early morning mist above the waterfall.

Photo: J. Maskell

Powell St Development

Friends of Oakley Creek made a submission and spoke at the hearing for the proposed development of 31 townhouses / units on ex-Council land in Powell Street, Avondale. The land backs onto Oakley Creek and, while a new 20m esplanade reserve has been vested with Council, Friends of Oakley Creek has a number of concerns about the development. Issues raised included:

- loss of permeable land, and the impact this will have on the creek
- potential increased flooding / reduced groundwater storage which is essential to help maintain a healthy base flow in the creek during the drier months
- loss of trees for wildlife habitat and shade over the stream there are a considerable number of large trees (mainly pine, but some natives) that the developer proposes to remove, which could also result in considerable erosion
- ensuring access to the esplanade reserve for restoration \slash monitoring \slash pest control
- promoting LID (Low Impact Design) with regards to paving / parking areas / stormwater retention etc.
- the cumulative effect of such developments in the wider catchment
- planting $\!\!\!/$ re-vegetation should be natives, to reduce the potential for garden 'escapees' into the reserve.

And, the developers appear to be including the esplanade reserve as part of their 'open space' in their equation to determine the number of units that can be constructed.



Proposed development site on Powell St for 31 units or townhouses to be built next to the creek.

Photos: W. John



On biodiversity ... what future for Oakley Creek?



How great a role could or should the restoration of Oakley Creek play in helping to meet New Zealand's commitment to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the associated Rio Declaration and action document Agenda 21? After all, the vegetation has been highly modified, with its non eco-sourced native plantings established in the 1980s, its historic introduced species such as the Star Mill tannery oak trees and its very urban location. Melissa Marler, consulting ecologist, explains it this way:

'Rangitoto Island is described as the "jewel in the crown" in terms of the Auckland Volcanic Field in the Department of Conservation's document about the criteria that make the Auckland Volcanic Cones candidates for World Heritage Status. It is regularly visited and enjoyed and it serves as a wonderful living example of scoria cone forest and all the processes that go along with this. The development of the plants and animals and mosaic of natural ecosystems there has all occurred during human times and humans very much interact with this environment. They are not separate from it, but largely it has been treated with care and respect, so it has retained a high degree of naturalness and natural value. This has allowed a great diversity of species to develop into something that is very rich indeed.

Areas on our Auckland Isthmus volcanic cones, which are largely unmodified (ie the underlying geology and topography is largely intact) are perfect candidates for thoughtful ecological restoration that is capable of producing some very wonderful natural areas that will increase natural scoria cone or lava flow ecosystems; and will also increase the resilience of these natural ecosystems in terms of making sure we haven't got all our "eggs in one basket". If something terrible happened to Rangitoto Is and all the scoria cone vegetation was wiped out, we would virtually have none left. If, however, we have other high quality ecological areas on other volcanic cones and lava flow fields on the mainland ... some of these may survive and species may be able to be repopulated and re-established particularly the rarer of these. It is definitely possible and realistic to restore areas of natural scoria cone/lava flow vegetation and create functional natural ecosystems, which form "stepping stone" habitats and collectively can make up quite a decent amount of natural landscape, if done thoughtfully and well maintained. For example, the lava flow forest at Withiel Thomas Reserve, Epsom, is in very wonderful condition, and now needs only minimal maintenance as it has healed to a point of being an intact system. Natural forest like this can exist in urban areas and can be maintained for very little cost once it is well established.

The aim is to get these areas as naturally functional and "alive" as possible, and as close to the original natural vegetation type and ecosystem as we possibly can, so they have integrity. Natural ecosystems provide crucial environmental and biodiversity "services" essential for life. Additionally they provide people with an opportunity to have contact with environments that are becoming increasingly scarce, particularly in urban areas. These environments can be used as a source of education, to teach people about natural ecosystems. If we lose these areas we will be not only impoverishing humans, we will be impoverishing the environment, biodiversity, and all living creatures. Invasive species, food plants or otherwise, have to be contained in order to manage global biodiversity loss. If small mammals had been rendered extinct during the dinosaur period, we would not be here today following the asteroid which destroyed most of life on earth - retaining biodiversity is crucial as we never know when we might need a seemingly redundant species and when it might come into its own. Invasive (and often "introduced") exotic

species create a monoculture and destroy endemic biological diversity.'

Basalt lava flows from the Owairaka Mt Albert volcano run down to Oakley Creek and a rare distinctive natural ecosystem type, mahoe rock forest, occurs on it at Harbutt and Phyllis Reserves. It is an example of the type of area which Melissa describes. Oakley Creek flows into a marine reserve - the Motu Manawa - and the whole stream environment affects the quality of this marine ecosystem which has been identified as worthy of protection. Lowland forest, in general, is poorly represented in New Zealand's protected areas - especially that which has integrity through to higher areas. Oakley Creek's headwaters are not all that far above sea level, but it is significant that parks and reserves exist along almost its entire length.

So, what do you think about the potential role Oakley Creek could and should play?



Notes from further up the Creek by Dorothy Maddock

As I sit, looking at the screen, wondering what to write for the journal, that strange and rather monotonous call of a morepork penetrates my musings, reminding me of one of my hobbies – bird watching. I have never quite heard, in that call, the words "more pork." Some early ancestors had more imagination than I have. I wonder if our loved, but predatory moggy, Molly, has left any small rodents for this night owl. Well, thankfully, he has a much bigger area to hunt in than she has.



Along Methuen Road, at about number 110, is a vacant section which has long been an entry to a rather forgotten part of Alan Wood Reserve - it was cut off from the main body of the reserve by the creek in its old course. Now that a new footbridge has been opened, this has become an excellent place to view the work of building the new motorway, especially for those who like to watch diggers, in plenty, in action, with all the attendant noise and, sometimes, dust. It is also a good place to view nearly all of the creek diversion.

I have been able to observe some of the local birds who use the newly-created open space, either for grazing or for their own pleasure.

There are numerous swallows darting around over the newly grassed slopes, making passing contact with the water in the creek. Only ripples in the runs show where they dipped their beaks in their search for insects. As they tend to favour open parklands, or countryside, with water available, it will be interesting to see if they remain in the neighbourhood when the traffic is finally confined to its tunnel and the replanting has been completed. The grasses, planted some weeks ago, along the new stream bank, seem to be getting established, but the long-term plan may not be just for the swallows and any waders which try to make their homes along an open, man-made part of the stream.





Spur-winged plovers also appear now and then. I was lucky enough to get a photograph which showed the spurs on the wings of one of these birds. These, it seems, are for defending the nest and chicks, and rather nasty they look. All the activity doesn't seem so attractive to the plovers; they don't hang around very long. I have seen them go off in the direction of one of the local sports fields, which would be much quieter for most days of the week.

There is now a walkway all the way from New North Road to Methuen Road, a sign proudly proclaims. And there is; and it can be muddy or even briefly flooded, after heavy rain, but it is there.

It would be nice to see more intrepid explorers finding their way up there.

Photos: D. Maddock

'Auckland's Remarkable Urban Forest'

Auckland Botanical Society is celebrating its 75th Jubilee year with a wonderful new book by Mike Wilcox, *Auckland's Remarkable Urban Forest*. It provides comprehensive accounts of the trees and forests of Auckland, including: the trees to be found in parks and reserves in each of the city's Local Board areas, and on campuses, school grounds, cemeteries, and at historic homesteads; native bush reserves in urban Auckland; native re-vegetation projects undertaken by community groups; exotic woodlands; street trees; trees of suburban home gardens; notable trees; flowering trees; tree health, forest climbers, weeds; and utilisation and management of the urban forest. Oakley Creek features in several sections.

Monitoring and Pest Control Update

Annual bird monitoring





On a hunt for hedgehogs

John Neilsen, DOC, and Polly the 'hog dog', checking out the creek for future hedgehog control

Photos: W. John







Some of the volunteers who helped at the annual bird monitoring - Sir Harold (top), Joseph (above), Brigitte (centre) and Marie (right). Photos: W. John.

My avian hour by Adrienne Stanton

It was my first time helping with the annual bird survey. A group of us went up to Harbutt Reserve to the upper monitoring sites and, goodness, the park was filled with a mob of wheeling, voracious gulls, being fed from a bucket of bread - how could we possibly count them? But we needn't have worried as all was quiet and peaceful at our actual monitoring sites.



We were each well provided with instructions, survey forms, bird id photos and a bag of fruit and nuts (for us, not the birds!). So, sitting on my groundsheet with binoculars, thermos plus munchies to hand and pen poised, I began the survey. It was very busy at first, recording the silver eyes, sparrows, fantails and blackbirds, but after a while a pattern of activity seemed to repeat and it was possible to make a sensible count. The method of recording at Oakley Creek is based on Landcare Research's annual garden bird survey and involves noting the maximum number of each species seen at any one time, over the course of one hour.



From my site, I could see out over towards Heron Park and so needed to regularly scan a large area of sky as well as the immediate area. I was very pleased to be able to record white faced heron flying along the creek and a harrier hawk. The hour did not take long to pass - I enjoyed the disciplined observation of the minutiae and rhythm of the bird life, seemingly unaffected by my presence or that of the passing trains and planes. Hopefully, I can help again next year.



As part of her university masters
degree research on the value of
community monitoring of freshwater in
NZ, Annabelle Coats (left) works with
Jagjeeta Kaur (right) at her regular
water monitoring site.

Photo: W. John

Going Bush - Wilderness walks in the city
NZ Herald Weekend magazine featured the
Oakley Creek Walkway recently, written by
Donna Fleming. An excerpt reads:

'There's a wide variety of flora, plus a wetlands area, but the highlight is a stunning natural waterfall that drops 6m into a pool. It's the only waterfall in central Auckland and you'd never know it was there from the road. A new viewing platform provides a good outlook, while benches in the grassy area beside the pool are ideal for a picnic. The Friends of Oakley Creek restore and maintain the creek and their efforts have paid off - the walkway is well-maintained and looks good.' Great to know we are appreciated!

Why is it important to preserve biodiversity?

'Because we like it.

Because we think we ought to.

Because we think we may need it.'

Peter KL Ng, Richard T Corlett

Thank you ERM!

The Environmental Resource Management (ERM) Foundation, which supports environmental projects around the world, has granted Friends of Oakley Creek funding for educational resources for our work with the community. ERM is a leading global provider of environmental, health, safety, risk, and social consulting services. The NZ team's services include environmental assessments and planning, contaminated site management, due diligence for transactions, sustainability reporting and verification, climate change services and life cycle assessment. See www.erm.com

Volunteer charter

'Confronting the environmental and conservation challenges facing Auckland requires the dedication of not only Auckland Council staff and contractors, but also Auckland citizens, volunteer groups and organisations. Volunteers play an essential, unique and invaluable role in the advocacy, planning, development and care of parks and open spaces. They compliment, support and add value to the work of employed Council staff.' Auckland Council.

In recognition of this, the Council is developing a charter, '...to protect the vital roles that volunteers play by providing a structured framework and agreement by which both parties are obliged to adhere. This charter outlines the obligations of the Auckland Council to supporting volunteers working in parks and open spaces, and the obligations of volunteers to supporting the Council's business and regulatory requirements.'

Conservation Week at Oakley Creek: Capture the creek! Welcome back cuckoo!

The cameras clicked and beeped ... Keen photographers gathered together to capture the creek on their cameras and their photographs are slowly appearing on the Friends of Oakley Creek facebook page, so keep checking! Thank you very much to our experts who helped out - Colin and Dorothy Maddock, Helen Wadsworth, Kennedy Warne and Mike Witt. Photos (from top left, clockwise) by Richard Stanton - follow the leader, koi carp and duck, Alex Boyd - fern and rimu studies and Det Lev - duckling rescue.









Nature Watch NZ is a brand new website from the New Zealand Bio-Recording Network. You can share your nature observations, meet other nature watchers, and get tricky species identified. Free to join and use:

- share observations of any New Zealand species, native, naturalised, or cultivated
- post photos as "ID Please" and get experts to help you ID them
- help others identify their photos
- comment on other observations -create and join Projects
- follow people interested in the things you like and see all their latest observations
- learn more about NZ species.

It's all very Flickr-like, and based on the excellent open-source <u>iNaturalist</u> project developed in California. You can link <u>NatureWatch NZ</u> to your Flickr account and it will know everything about your photo that you've told Flickr (when, where for geotagged photos, and what if you've tagged it with a species name).

www.naturewatch.org.nz.



We all went cuckoo ... The inaugural Welcome Back Shining Cuckoo! festival was a fun event by the waterfall, to welcome pipiwharauroa, the shining cuckoo to Oakley Creek as the messenger of spring. Cuckoo songs were broadcast into the bush - by the bird and by the people, including the Cuckelele Jive, which was composed by Kevin Fogarty and Kennedy Warne especially for the event. Artist, Heather Hunt, created wonderful cuckoo masks and Heather Docherty wove a fantastic giant grey warbler nest into which we posted egg shaped spring wishes. Cuckoos were coloured in and more cuckoos were created from pine cones then launched into flight with the help of a catapult, made by Mt Albert St Judes scout group. There was a cuckoo egg and spoon obstacle course and there were the cuckoos' favourite spring blossoms to cast into the stream with more spring wishes. If you couldn't make it on the day, take a look at Sam Polkinghorne's video, which will soon be posted on our facebook page. A big kui kui whiti whiti ora thank you to Kennedy Warne for conceiving the idea and making it happen, to Heather, Heather, Kevin, the band, Sam and everyone else who helped promote the event, cut out masks, participate and carry things!

Check your neighbourhood ...

Auckland Council have published report cards for 2012 which give up-to-date overview information on the state of Auckland's freshwater, marine, air and terrestrial environments, as well as reporting on the region's demographics and quality of life. You can find these at www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/stateofauckland Our local marine report scores a C but our freshwater and terrestrial environments score only an E - we all have much more work to do!

What is this?



Oakley Creek Crossing Conundrum by Christopher Stanton

A duck is swimming across the creek at 1.8 km/h, just upstream from the thundering waterfall. The creek is flowing at an average speed of 0.75 m/s, and it is 3.5 m wide.

What is the shortest length of time the duck can cross the creek in? And how far upstream must it start in order to avoid being swept over the waterfall?

Puzzle solutions can be found below, at the end of the newsletter. Photos: left - W. John, right - A. Stanton



Weed Watch

This section of the newsletter features details about weeds that threaten the native plants along Oakley Creek. You can help by tackling these at the stream and in your garden, if present. In this issue:

Acetosa sagittata, Polygonaceae – climbing dock, rambling dock, wild kumara, turkey rhubarb, potato vine, climbing sorrel



Native to southern Africa and cultivated as a vegetable in Indonesia (the leaves and young stems are edible when cooked), climbing dock has become a problem weed in New Zealand and Australia. Previously called Rumex sagittatus, A. sagittata is a climbing perennial herb which grows to 4 metres, smothering native regeneration and providing a structure for other invasive weeds to grow up. Climbing dock has alternately arranged arrow shaped leaves, grooved green to reddish hairless stems and kumara-like tubers on long rhizomes, which may extend horizontally quite some distance from the shoot. The small pale green to pink flowers are borne in massed panicles high up on the plant in spring and summer. The reddish pink fruit, which dry to papery brown, are flattened three-winged heartshaped capsules (1 cm). The pink seed is wind dispersed and can float on water. The plant may die back in adverse conditions damp or drought, and then re-grows from the tubers. However, climbing dock is intolerant of shade.





Control: It is best to weed out climbing dock in spring, before seed is produced and when you can carefully trace each growing shoot back to the rhizomes and tubers. The rhizomes are easily broken so careful digging is required to locate all the tubers. Note that rhizomes and tuber fragments can re-grow, use of herbicide usually does not kill the tubers, and vigilant checking over several years will be needed. If removing plants later in the season, carefully bag the capsules as great drifts of seed will be dropped with the slightest movement. Rhizomes and tubers should be sent to landfill.







Photos: A. Stanton







From left - new growth on the gabian wall, pink coral fungus and an old pine branch.

Photos: W. John





The plants are laid out ready for planting, David Bowden from Auckland Council arrives with the spades and the community digs in ...









Brent Druskovich, archaeologist, checks a hole for any signs of the Creek's history, such as charcoal or old glass ...





Waikowhai Scout group are among those on the production line, tying flagging tape on stakes to mark the plants for future care ...



Heather collects the empty plant pots (left), then, job well done, all gather to enjoy hot soup and rolls, provided by the Well Connected Alliance. Photos: A. Stanton

- August 2012

A community planting story

'Oakley Creek is a good example of a well-conducted restoration project, involving volunteers and council support, and with clear objectives of restoring the ecological health of the catchment.'

- Mike Wilcox, Auckland's Remarkable Urban Forest.

Auckland Botanical Society, 2012.

Wildlife encounters







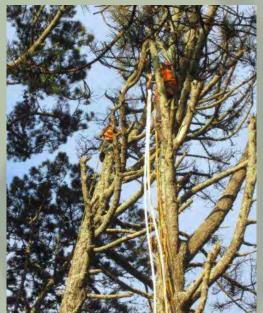


Photos: W. John (unless otherwise stated).

From top left: tunnelweb spiders are still around; fly on stinkhorn fungus - yum; dew on a spider's web;; and bottom left - a monarch butterfly dries its wings in the winter sun.

Photos: fly on fungus - A. Stanton; remainder - W. John.

Out and about



More trees were removed from the Oakley Creek Walkway in late June - this time dangerous dead pines on the east side of the creek, near the litter trap.

Open Polytechnic students planted new trees in the gap left behind.





Exhaust engulfed a **Te Ngahere** worker as the arundo grass infestation (above) was mown down, in June.









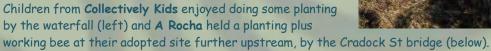


At the **June Community Planting**, Mike and Jydee Leonard helped out (above left), St Peter's students gave service (centre) and Alan Kent (right) found a quick way down the slope! The **July Community planting** was on a very frosty morning in the Lizard Management Area (below left), but the sun and digging soon warmed everyone up, including Peter Whiting and his daughter (below).

















The Walkway wasn't the only part of Oakley Creek where restoration planting took place - Puketapapa Local Board organised a community planting at Molley Green Reserve, part of the creek's headwaters (right).





David Bowden, Auckland Council (below), delivered plants to **Mt Roskill Intermediate School** for planting along their part of Oakley Creek.





Mt Albert St Judes Scout Group carried out infill planting along the creek below the scout hall.





Unitec
organised two
plantings along
the Wairaka
Stream, which
flows into
Oakley Creek, in
June (left) and
August (below).

The pukekos look very appreciative of the end result.







Harbutt Reserve was the scene of some wonderful weeding by Telecom / Vector volunteers, Keith and Simon, and John Stevenson, who also helped out for Friends of Oakley Creek - before (left) and after (right).





Mambana of the Friends of Oaklay Creak

Members of the Friends of Oakley Creek committee had a site visit to the SH20 stream diversion works.



BNZ - Closed for Good picked up rubbish, including hauling this 'bed' out of the creek.





Weedbuster
volunteer, Keith
Ayton (left), had a
busy time in
Harbutt Reserve
felling brush
wattles.

United bridge by night.



Did you know?

- A collective term for bats is 'a cloud of bats'.
- Short tailed bats are bigger than long tailed bats.
- Long tailed bats live in Swanson and range 100 km² including as close to us as Green Bay.
- Long tailed bats roost in both native and exotic trees.
- Some of the Auckland green geckoes found on Waiheke Is. are yellow.
- Hochstetter's frogs live in the Kokako Recovery Area in the Hunuas.
- Inanga lay their eggs in vegetation on stream banks at the top of the spring tide saline wedge that flows up streams.
- Native sun orchids only open their flowers at midday.
 - from *Auckland's Biodiversity Jewels*, a Heritage Festival seminar, presented by Auckland Council's Biodiversity Team

BIODIVERSITY: PROTECT RESTORE CONNECT

Puzzle Solutions

What is this?



Close up of a ponga tree fern trunk.

Oakley Creek Crossing Conundrum

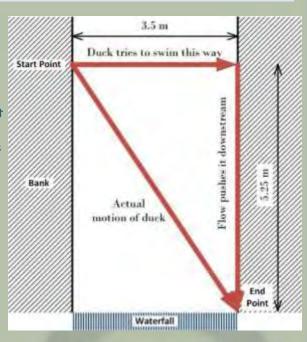
First, find the speed of the duck in metres per second:

The duck will reach the other side first if it swims at right angles to the bank. In doing this, it will be swept downstream, but this does not affect the time it takes to cross.

Finding the time taken to cross:

During this time, the duck will be swept downstream at the same speed as the river, since it is swimming across the flow, not trying to swim against or with it.

Finding the distance swept downstream:











We gratefully acknowledge the support of ASB Community Trust, Ministry for the Environment, WWF-New Zealand, The Tindall Foundation, Auckland Council, Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS) and The Lion Foundation.

Next Newsletter

News, articles, contributions and comments for the next newsletter are welcome and can be sent to info@oakleycreek.org.nz

New Members Welcome, Donations Too!

We would welcome more members (\$10.00) and/or donations towards the work we are doing to protect and restore our wonderful urban 'taonga' - Oakley Creek Te Auaunga. Donations over \$5.00 are tax deductible.

Contributions can be made directly into our bank account:

Friends of Oakley Creek - Kiwibank - A/c 38-9003-0978224-00

or cheques, made out to 'Friends of Oakley Creek', can be sent to: 4/65 Woodward Road, Mt Albert, Auckland 1025.



Chairperson: Wendy John Treasurer: Jane Shand Secretary: Volunteer needed Committee: Heather Docherty, Ross Ihaka, Nigel Mather, Helen Mellsop, Alicia Warren.

Newsletter Editor: Adrienne Stanton

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